

[Article E] Z-Gram 66

Background: Since its creation in 1775, the U.S. Navy has had a checkered past regarding policies on integration. African Americans served during every major conflict, though often they were forced to serve in segregated positions as cooks, stewards, or barbers. In 1948, President Truman signed Executive Order 9981, which officially desegregated the Armed Forces, including the Navy. Despite an official policy of integration, institutional racism continued to simmer decades later. Admission tests for enlisted sailors and to the Naval Academy favored white males as opposed to blacks well into the 20th century.

On July 1, 1970, Admiral Elmo Zumwalt assumed duties as Chief of Naval Operations (CNO). In this position he had tremendous control over all policy issues. Similar to an Executive Order by the President of the United States, Zumwalt was able to issue far-reaching, law-altering policies through written directives, or NAVOPS. Such proclamations were nicknamed “Z-grams” during Zumwalt’s tenure as CNO. On December 17, 1970, Zumwalt issued Z-Gram 66. In this document, Zumwalt acknowledged the failures of the Navy to live up to the ideals of Executive Order 9981 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. After meeting with groups of black officers and enlisted men, Zumwalt wrote, “Prior to these meetings, I was convinced that, compared with the civilian community, we had relatively few racial problems in the Navy. However, after exploring the matter in some depth with these two groups I have discovered I was wrong—we do have problems.”

Z-Gram 66 went on to list several examples of ongoing institutional racism in the Navy and how Zumwalt planned to correct them:

ATTEMPTING TO LOCATE HOUSING FOR THEIR FAMILIES. THIS SITUATION AND OTHERS LIKE IT ARE INDICATIVE IN SOME CASES OF LESS THAN FULL TEAMWORK BEING BROUGHT TO BEAR BY THE WHOLE NAVY TEAM ON BEHALF OF SOME OF OUR MEMBERS AND FAILURE TO USE EXISTING AUTHORITY AND DIRECTIVES TO ENFORCE THEIR RIGHTS (SECNAV INST 5350.12). IN SOME PLACES HOUSING PERSONNEL ARE TACITLY CONTRIBUTING TO DISCRIMINATION IN HOUSING.

6. SECRETARY CHAFEE _____ AND I HAVE ASKED OUR STAFFS TO BEGIN WORK WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF THE NAVY DEPARTMENT TO MAKE AN IN-DEPTH INVESTIGATION OF THIS PROBLEM AND PRESENT TO US WITHIN 60 DAYS PROPOSALS WHICH WILL HELP ALLEVIATE THE MOST ACUTE HOUSING PROBLEMS.

Z-Gram 66 is often referred to as the “Equal Opportunity” directive. It stipulated that every base, naval station, and aircraft squadron designate someone as a Special Assistant for Minority Affairs to increase conversations about diversity. The NAVOP also required that minority voices would be heard through the inclusion of African American wives in spouses’ organizations. The document closed with an appeal to all naval personnel: “We are counting on your support to help seek out and eliminate those demeaning areas of discrimination that plague our minority shipmates. Ours must be a Navy family that recognizes no artificial barriers of race, color or religion. There is no black Navy, no white Navy—just one Navy—The United States Navy.”

JOINT MESSAGEFORM

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BOOK	MESSAGE HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS					172054Z	DEC	70
ZEO ZOC								

FROM: CNO {Z-66}

TO: NAVOP

0989

UNCLAS //NOOOOO//

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IN THE NAVY

A. MY 270004Z AUG 70 {NAVOP Z-14}

B. MY 141346Z SEP 70 {NAVOP Z-24}

1. THE PURPOSE OF THIS NAVOP IS TO EXPRESS MY WHOLEHEARTED SUPPORT OF THE POLICIES ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STRONGLY REAFFIRMED BY THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY IN ALNAV 51, TO EXPRESS MY GENERAL GUIDANCE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE POLICIES, AND TO DIRECT IMPLEMENTATION OF A FEW OF THE ACTIONS WE CAN TAKE IMMEDIATELY.
2. LAST MONTH, SECRETARY CHAFEE AND I, ALONG WITH OTHER SENIOR OFFICIALS OF THE NAVY DEPARTMENT, MET ON ONE OCCASION WITH REPRESENTATIVE BLACK NAVY OFFICERS AND THEIR WIVES AND LATER WITH A REPRESENTATIVE GROUP OF BLACK ENLISTED MEN AND THEIR WIVES. PRIOR TO THESE MEETINGS, I WAS CONVINCED THAT, COMPARED WITH THE CIVILIAN COMMUNITY, WE HAD RELATIVELY FEW RACIAL PROBLEMS IN THE NAVY. HOWEVER, AFTER EXPLORING THE MATTER IN SOME DEPTH WITH THESE TWO GROUPS, I HAVE DISCOVERED THAT I WAS WRONG--WE DO HAVE PROBLEMS, AND IT IS MY

DISTR:

DRAFTER: OP-DD

DIST: STANDARD NAVOP DIST

THIS MESSAGE MEETS NAVY
CRITERIA FOR ELECTRICAL
TRANSMISSION AS A GENERAL
MESSAGE

DRAFTER TYPED NAME, TITLE, OFFICE SYMBOL AND PHONE

E.R. ZUMWALT, JR., ADMIRAL, OP-DD

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

TYPED NAME, TITLE, OFFICE SYMBOL AND PHONE

SIGNATURE

RELEASE

GOG OP

OP-094B

OP-094B1

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

UNCLASSIFIED 172054Z DEC 70

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